BRITISH COLUMBIA

Education Report

STUDENTS MOVE OUT OF CLASS AND ON TO THE JOB

The Province and Industry Training Authority recently announced a new $1.4 million trades-awareness program that will encourage exploration by students in grades 6–9 by using local tradespeople and hands-on activities. The program is expected to generate even more interest in complementary programs for secondary students, like ACE IT and the Secondary School Apprenticeship. ***Read more.***

LEFT: Ministers Bond and Thorpe with students in residential home under construction, Summerland, February 6, 2006

HOT TOPIC

The provincial class size and composition report is complete. Nearly nine out of 10 classes have 30 or fewer students. More than half have 26 or fewer. Likewise, more than half of classes have no ESL students, and only 16 per cent have four or more. One third of classes have no special-needs students; again, only 16 per cent have four or more. The average class sizes are 17.8 students in Kindergarten; 20.8 students in grades 1–3; 26.4 students in grades 4–7; and 25.1 students in grades 8–12.

However, there are classes that do not appear to be in compliance with legislated class-size limits; boards have been asked to verify their data and explain how they intend to correct the problem. Facilitator Vince Ready recommended the School Act include a means of enforcing class-size limits; government looks forward to his further recommendation detailing an appropriate mechanism. At the same time, we are piloting a review process in Langley school district – looking at how classes are structured, who participates in decision-making, how teachers are involved, and how well the system is working – and hope to expand the process into other districts.

The provincial class size and composition report will ensure that we have an informed discussion on class size as we move forward with teachers, parents and administrators at the Learning Roundtable. The roundtable is a valuable forum for understanding issues about class size and composition, and for developing workable improvements to classroom conditions, helping B.C. students achieve their best.

Class-size information is available on our ***website.***

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

I'm pleased to launch the first issue of the Education Report for British Columbia. This report will provide a regular update of what is happening in education in B.C.

Honourable Shirley Bond Minister of Education

B.C. is home to many outstanding principals. I'm very excited and proud that four of our principals are among "Canada's Outstanding Principals" for 2006.

I've had the good fortune to see two of the award-winning principals in action.

When I walked into George Jay elementary school in Victoria and met Janine Roy, I knew she had received the outstanding principal award for very good reasons. As she interacted with students and staff, I saw firsthand her sense of pride, caring and teamwork.

Patrick Duncan of Cowichan secondary school in Duncan beamed with pride as he showed off his great students, staff and programs to me on my recent visit.

Principals have an immeasurable influence on their students and staff, and Victor Bifano of South Kamloops secondary school and Susan MacNeil of Pearson Road elementary school in Kelowna are no exception. I look forward to seeing their leadership in action very soon.

A principal is found at the heart of each school success story. Congratulations to all the outstanding principals in British Columbia. ***Read more.***

THRONE SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

- Every school district in B.C. will be visited by the Premier or the Education Minister, who will meet with educators, trustees, parents and students to seek their ideas for positive change.
- Hold the first-ever Teachers' Congress later this year.
- Ensure there is an appropriate mix of local autonomy and flexibility in education decision-making.
- Establish a new provincial "virtual" school.
- Launch a provincewide Parents' Education Network.
- Establish a teacher employment registry.

Pamela Porter
The Crazy Man

Reading Corner

Pamela Porter of Sidney B.C. won a 2005 Governor General's Award for The Crazy Man. In this easy-to-read free verse novel, Emaline recounts how she was injured in a farming accident, how her father fled instead of working through his fear that the accident was his fault, and how her mother took a chance and hired a man from the mental hospital to run the farm. This book is suitable for students in grades 3–7.